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Project 3: Program Research Exhibit

Prepared for Jean von Barga, Arch. 549

The Con-way Site in NW Portland is an industrial site composed of several city blocks. The site has long been the home to Con-way trucking company and their regional freight facilities. Due to the recent loss of this industrial use, there is an opportunity to redevelop the site. Both the City of Portland Planning Bureau and the existing residents of NW Portland hope to replace the industrial facilities with new residential properties to create a vibrant live/work neighborhood. In preparation for this long-term project, the Con-way site has been rezoned and a specific overlay plan, "The NW Plan District" has been created to guide the development throughout the district.

One particular aspect of the development plan addressed specifically by this investigation is the improvement to transportation infrastructure including roads, sidewalks, transit lines, parking and more. These items are fundamental in the effort to create a pedestrian-oriented, walkable, livable neighborhood. The goal of this paper is to understand how, and to what extent, the transportation infrastructure will dictate the development of the Con-way Site. The findings have been pulled primarily from two official planning documents: (1) The NW Plan District of the Portland Zoning Code and (2) The Portland Transportation System Plan.

It is important at this step to define the Con-way Site and the NW District. Although the actual Con-way facilities are limited to an area bound by Thurman St. on the North, Pettygrove St. on the South, 20th Ave. on the East and 22nd Ave. on the West, the redevelopment district extends far beyond those boundaries. The Con-way site is to

be the center of a new neighborhood district that extends as far as East as Interstate 405, as far West as 24th Ave., and as far South as Lovejoy St. (see vicinity map).

The future development of transportation networks in this district is governed by the Portland Department of Transportation (PDOT) and is detailed in their planning document titled “The Transportation System Plan” (TSP). In addition to general development guidelines that apply to the entire city of Portland, this document also includes several items that specifically apply to the Con-way Site.

One such item is the desire to create a specially designated Pedestrian District centered around the Con-way site. It is interesting to note the consistency between the Portland Zoning Code and the Transportation System Plan in this instance. They have obviously been coordinated in the effort to redevelop the Con-way site according to a particular vision. The TSP specifically calls for improvements to the pedestrian environment to emphasize a district identity and to encourage walking as the primary mode of transportation within the district. PDOT has many strategies in creating a Pedestrian District relating to the careful management of foot traffic, bicycle traffic, vehicular traffic, freight traffic, public transit, and community main streets.

PDOT has published a resource dedicated entirely to developing pedestrian oriented zones titled the “Pedestrian Design Guide.” According to this document, all streets in a pedestrian district are deemed to be equal in importance and they must have sidewalks on both sides of the street. Other traffic measures include widened sidewalks, curb extensions, street lighting, street trees, signage, median pedestrian refuges at major streets, marked crosswalks, and traffic signals designed to create gaps in the traffic stream. On-street parallel parking is desired in pedestrian zones as a means of slowing traffic speeds as well as providing a comfort buffer between pedestrians and moving vehicles. All of these measures would be appropriate at the Con-way site and consistent with the TSP’s goal of creating a Pedestrian District. Furthermore, The City of Portland has a program for creating pedestrian streets and city walkways that are specifically designed to enhance the pedestrian experience. None of the streets at the Con-way site or the surrounding district currently bear this special street classification. Perhaps developing a few of the streets into specially designated pedestrian streets would help to establish the Pedestrian District that the PDOT desires. (see map 1)

Bicycle paths are another important transportation component to Pedestrian Districts. PDOT has established bicycle routes on designated streets to serve bike traffic. The Con-way site is currently well served by bicycle routes. East-West routes can be found on Thurman, Raleigh, Overton, Lovejoy, and Johnson Streets. North-South routes can be found on 18th, 19th, and 24th Avenues. This network seems to adequately provide for bicycle traffic as described in the TSP. (see map 2)

Another important aspect of Pedestrian Districts is access to public transit lines. In Pedestrian Districts, there are to be more transit lines and more frequent stops than in other areas of the city. Currently, The NW District is served by Tri-Met through three different bus lines as well as the Portland Streetcar. However, only the #17 bus line runs directly adjacent to the Con-way facilities. It is likely that additional transit lines will need to be added in order for the development to become a Pedestrian District as described by the PDOT guidelines. (see map 3). If a civic center for the district is developed on the exact property currently occupied by the Con-way facilities, it is likely that a special pedestrian connection will need to be provided to link the site with the streetcar line which lies two blocks South. The Portland Zoning Code requires that all developments along streetcar lines have an “active use” on the first floor as well as a required amount of windows fronting onto the street. This is a key component to pedestrian oriented developments.

Vehicular traffic is perhaps the most important factor of transportation networks. All streets in Portland have been classified into one of seven different categories according to traffic volume. The largest four categories of streets do not occur on the site, which seems to be consistent with a Pedestrian District. Three street designations do occur on the Con-way site: neighborhood collector streets, traffic access streets, and local service streets. (see map 4). The lack of major thoroughfares is a key factor in keeping the district pedestrian friendly. Any future development to the site should avoid the addition of the larger classifications of streets, always attempting to promote the smallest possible classification.

Another vehicular related issue identified by the TSP is the de-coupling of 18th Ave, and 19th Ave. Currently, these avenues are paired one-way streets running from Burnside Ave. until their northern termination at the train tracks. They are the only one-

way streets in the entire NW district and PDOT has determined that returning these streets to two-way traffic would improve vehicular circulation in the district. Vehicular traffic could further be improved with the continuation of Quimby Street and Savier Street through the Con-way site. Currently, both streets dead-end at Con-way as the industrial facilities and surface parking lots form super-blocks. The city of Portland desires the original city grid be brought back and remain unbroken.

PDOT has identified key streets that need to be developed as community main streets to promote social sustainability and community vitality. Near the Con-way site, Northrup, Lovejoy, and Thurmon have been identified as East-West community main streets and 21st Ave. and 23rd Ave. have been identified as North-South community main streets. (see map 5). This network seems adequate to create a cohesive neighborhood, although it is important to note that 21st Ave. runs right through the existing Con-way facilities and is currently not developed as a community street of any kind. A new development plan for the site should include a strategy to develop this stretch of 21st Ave. into a community street which includes providing for retail and civic uses. Main streets are required to have an active use on the first floor, a continuous unbroken building façade fronting onto the street, and a required amount of windows facing the street.

Finally, vehicle parking is a major concern around the Con-way site. The number of parking spaces is currently described in the Zoning Code as “scarce.” The abandoned industrial facilities currently provide a significant number of surface parking lots and parking spaces. However, if the property is redeveloped into a mixed-use neighborhood, these surface parking lots will be lost which will further contribute to the scarcity of parking. The NW Plan District of the Portland Zoning Code attempts to address this issue with careful management of existing parking condition as well as discouraging automobile-oriented development. Drive-through facilities are completely prohibited. Surface parking lots are also prohibited as they serve as “missing teeth” in the urban fabric that fracture the pedestrian oriented district. Accessory parking may happen in multi-level parking structures, however these structures must be either underground, or above the ground floor. The NW Plan District insists that parallel street parking is the primary means of vehicular parking and the preferred development model.

The redevelopment of the Con-way property is a wonderful opportunity for NW Portland. The neighborhood, once fragmented by a non-compatible industrial use, can now unite as a cohesive district that is livable, walkable, and pedestrian oriented. There are many different transportation related issues that factor into the development of such a district. In some cases, the proper infrastructure is in place to move forward with the development. In other cases, the proper infrastructure does not exist, though it is absolutely needed if the Pedestrian District is to be a success. The traffic related issues outlined in the Transportation System Plan must be at the forefront of any proposed site development plan.

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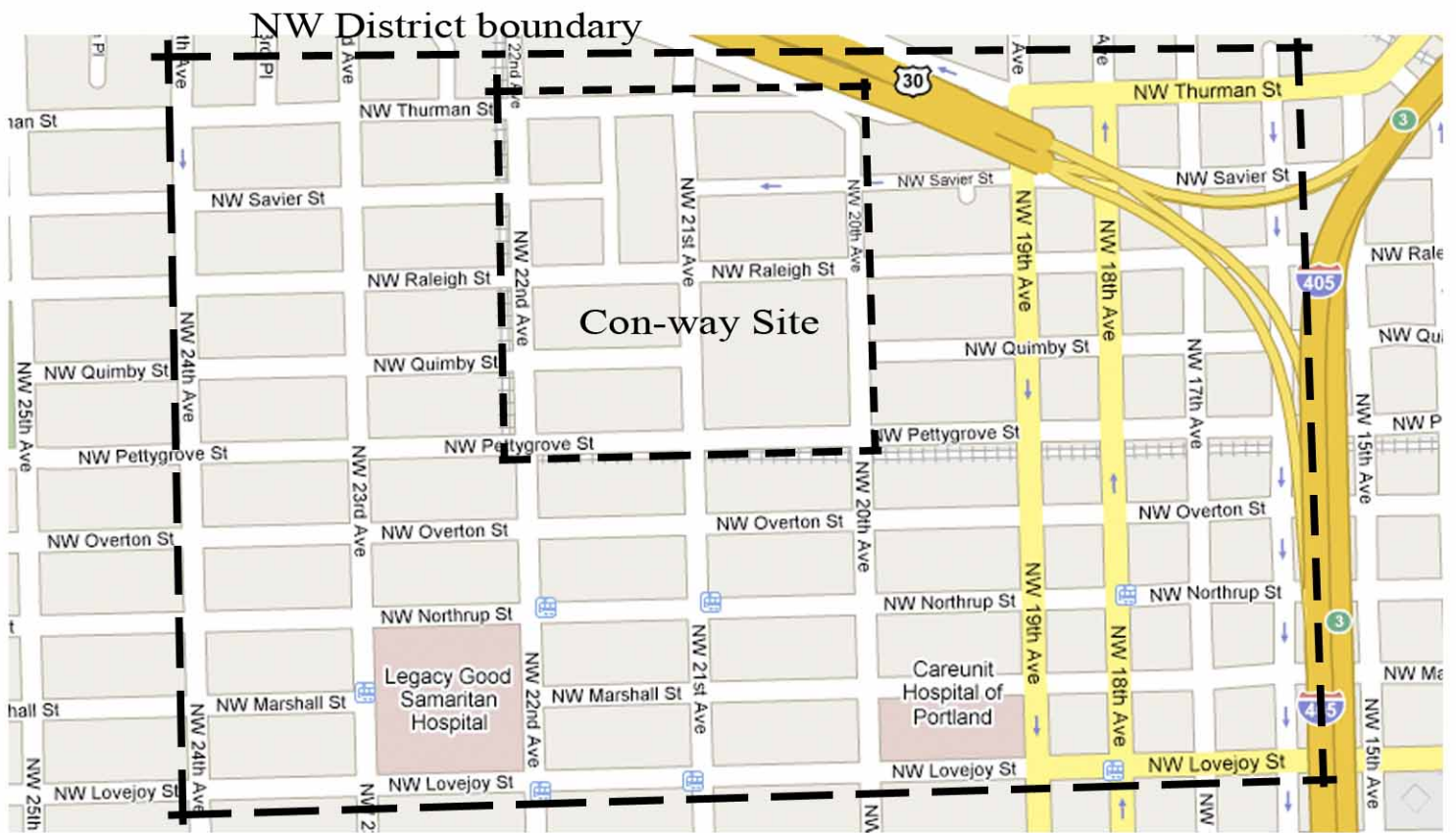
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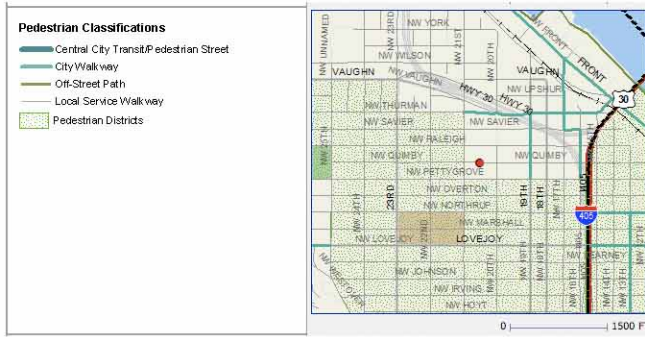
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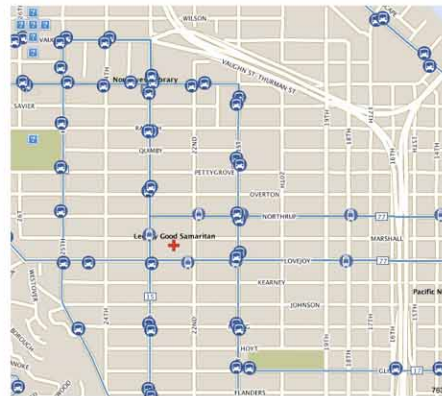
Vicinity Map



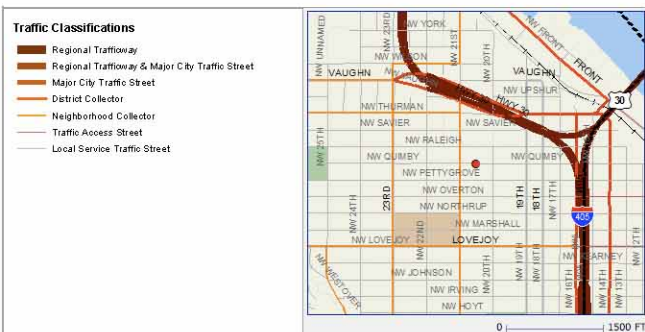
Map 1



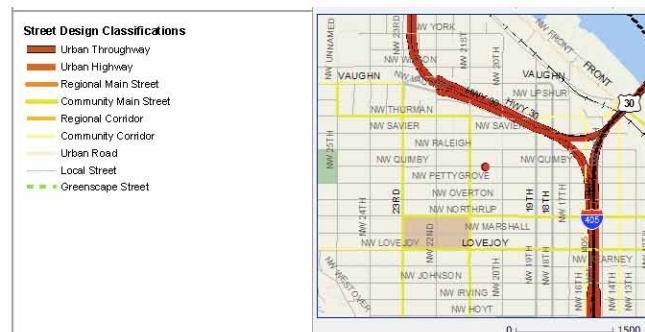
Map 2



Map 3



Map 4



Map 5